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Newsletter

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July 2012

Citizen Spotlight

Courtesy of Poseidon

I'm still a pretty big newbie when it comes to wrangling people to sit down and talk with me for a few minutes about themselves as part of this column. There's something about the words "interview" and "questions" that tends to make people a little nervous, and you'd probably be surprised to hear that each month we're not flooded with people clamoring to have their name thrown into the spotlight. With all that in mind, I was left at the last minute scrambling to find someone to answer a few questions in order to let me write this little column.

Just as I was at the end of my rope, with a deadline just a day away - enter, Stacee: artist and content creator for Activeworlds, Inc. (AWI). She's been with the company longer than most citizenships have been active (July of 2000), and is the staff member who's been around Active Worlds the longest (aside from Rick, JP and Ellen). Unlike the other members of staff, she came into Active Worlds the same way the rest of us did: as a complete and utter newb. All of that, and the fact that she's become such an integral part of the community itself is what made us both think it might be appropriate to highlight her here, on this column.

"I had been offered a job as an artist at Active Worlds. Almost everyone at the company had used Active Worlds previous to being hired. I hadn't. It was an eye-opening experience, and I loved what I saw, and all the possibilities it opened for creation."

And while she came in with no previous experience in AW, she taught herself how to create 3D content using TrueSpace and evolved into an integral member of an art team at Activeworlds, Inc. Over the past twelve years she's become a staple in the content creation process at AWI - the number of objects, avatars and textures she's created is a bit astounding:

"The bulk of creation is contained in textures, models, avatars, and sequence animations. Avatars are definitely my strong point. But I like pushing beyond those bounds and learning other aspects of the program. And my creations alone are nice, but it isn't until I blend them with what others are contributing that something spectacular is born. I enjoy working with others and putting together things that people love. It's always about creating things people love."

Stacee and I have talked a lot about her role at AWI over the years, and her words above are echoed in that she seems to have the most fun when she's working on a team (often in the past she'd work teamed with Oleyo). And while you can't freely use or download a majority of her creations, you can see them in almost any AWI owned world inside Active Worlds. She's also been responsible for much of the content in places like Stagecoach Island, the CAV system, and the Miuchiz game, just to name a few.

One might imagine that being an employee at AW offers her the ability to do whatever she wants, wherever she wants in the Universe. And while being a member of staff does grant her some pretty cool powers, most of her presence in the Universe is visible through her workshop worlds (mad scientist laboratories?). When asked how many worlds she had:

"I've worked on a lot of worlds, but the ones that serve as my personal work spaces are six in number. The worlds start with my citizen name and a number behind it. Keeps it simple to remember. I use the worlds to bug test new creations, or items people have sent me that they are having difficulties with. The worlds also tend to be warehouses of many of my past creations, a library if you will, that allows everyone at the company easy access to inventory we already have. And then it's also a place for me to work on projects outside of the scope of work. I can't seem to find enough time to create everything I'd love to do."

Aside from all the work she does for the company through 3D model and texture creation, she also has had quite the social life over the years. Easily one of the staff members most active in the community, she's been an icon inside a community gaming world (AWRPG), and even filled in as Community Liaison in the interim between Mountain Myst and Flagg. And while fluctuating between extra curricular activities, filling in for other positions, and still completing all the work she's been assigned as an artist at AW can be taxing to any sane human being, I get the impression she loves it:

"I've been a part of so many chapters in Active Worlds, met so many amazing people, and have been a part of some great activities. I love that variety. I love the challenges, both artistically and personally. It feeds my desire to grow and be active. I'm addicted to that growth actually. I still see all the things I could do, even after 12 years."

What's she working on now?

"I've been working on a museum project where kids will be able to visit the Cretaceous seas and the last Ice Age. How cool is that? Where was this when I was a kid?!"

So... Now that we've got all that covered, let's get a little more direct. Stacee has had a lot to do with the successful (albeit bumpy) implementation of the CAV system in AW. When asked to comment about the CAV system itself, she offered some insight on where the possibilities of that system were going:

"We've only scratched the surface with CAVs. Before, we were locked into a CAV template that couldn't be altered without breaking any presets others created. Now we're at a stage where we can provide new content on the fly and allow people to choose what items they want for their inventory. We can even go into whole new categories beyond human (aliens and animals anyone?). CAVs are a hard medium to learn but it's an exciting new direction that the software is going in. There are people that love having a unique look, so artists who can create amazing items for their look will be in demand."

I also asked if there was one thing she'd change about the CAV system... Her response is one that will give you a little insight into her own personality, "Do you think they'll have fuzzy bunny slippers for the CAVs? My word, I hope so." And finally, where does she think Active Worlds is going in the future?

"I see it heading in new directions. Those of us who have been here for a long time have tried everything. Or have we? Maybe we've tried everything in the box we are used to. But this year challenges us to look in new boxes, to try completely new tactics, to rethink how we do everything, to no longer take for granted that the way we've been doing things is the way to keep going. We have all kinds of new options in Active Worlds that are begging to be utilized and explored. I want to see us go that way. I want to see a Renaissance happen in Active Worlds, a rebirth. And I think the climate is right for everyone to take that leap."

Coincidentally, this month marks her twelfth year of using Active Worlds. Congrats, Stacee - we're glad to have you :)

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Know someone who should be in the spotlight? (Including you!)
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